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ABSTRACT

An action research project developed a program for implementing character education to improve behavior, particularly as related to respect and responsibility and to reduce inappropriate behavioral choices. Targeted population consisted of junior high and high school students at three sites in a community located in a Midwestern suburban metropolitan area. The behavioral problems in the classroom were documented through data from administrative records revealing the nature and frequency of discipline problems, student and staff input from surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students reported individual differences and exposure to experiences with which they were not yet prepared to deal. Faculty reported lack of parental involvement, lack of student accountability and responsibility, and increased awareness of and desire for material possessions. Reviews of curricula content and instructional strategies showed over emphasis on academic content and deficiency in relating the material to the students' personal lives to develop student decision-making abilities. A review of solution strategies, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in selection of four categories of intervention: (1) help students identify social morals and values of society; (2) teach responsibility through empathy and self discipline; (3) encourage parental involvement in the student's educational life; and (4) establish class activities that promote student responsibility for problem solving and conflict resolution. Findings suggest that implementation of the character education program improved student levels of respect and responsibility. Administrative data gathered documented a reduction in unacceptable behavior. Results from post-surveys indicate this program was effective in raising awareness of character education, hence improving student behavior in the school setting. Includes seven figures. Eight appendixes include consent forms, behavior survey, Likert Scale behavior survey, teacher pre-survey, student focus group, student post-survey, and teacher post-survey. (Contains 21 references.) (Author/BT)

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CHARACTER EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS

Marg Duer
Adam Parisi
Mark Valintis

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

SO 034 383

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight Professional

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

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Abstract

This report describes a program for implementing character education in order to improve behavior particularly related to respect and responsibility and to reduce inappropriate behavioral choices. The targeted population consisted of junior high and high school students in a growing middle to upper middle class community, located in a suburban metropolitan area in the Midwest. The behavioral problems in the classroom were documented through data revealing the nature and frequency of discipline problems from school administrative records and student and staff input from surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students reported differences in values from individual to another, exposure to experiences they are not yet prepared to deal with. Faculty reported lack of parental involvement with students, lack of student accountability and responsibility, and increased awareness of and desire for material possessions. Reviews of curricula content and instructional strategies revealed over emphasis on academic content and a deficiency in relating the material to the students' personal lives to develop student decision-making abilities.

A review of solution strategies suggested by research, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of four major categories of intervention:

-To help students identify social morals and values of society,
-To learn responsibility through empathy and self-discipline,
-To encourage parental involvement in the educational life of the student,
-To establish class activities which promote student responsibility for problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Results of this research study indicated that the implementation of the character education program did improve student levels of respect and responsibility in the selected schools. Students were conscious of rules and regulations and acted more appropriately in school after the program began. Data gathered from administrative referral records documented a reduction in unacceptable behavior as measured by the number of tardies, truancies, insubordination, and fighting. Results from post-surveys suggested that this program was effective in raising the awareness of character education, hence improving student behavior in the school setting. Students gave positive responses regarding the program's effectiveness and incorporation into classrooms. With all results analyzed, the program was successful in achieving its goal of improving student respect and responsibility.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Across the country, elementary and secondary schools have been implementing various forms of character education programs during the last decade. The Columbine, Colorado, assault by two students who brutally injured and murdered many of their fellow classmates in May 1999, has fueled this trend. Again in the spring of 2001, a student in a suburb of San Diego opened fire on classmates. As these incidents of violence continue to occur in schools, educational communities have responded by implementing character education programs in an effort to recreate safe environments. The trend of continued violent behaviors raises the question of the effectiveness of character education as perceived by administrators, teachers, and students in sites A, B, and C.

The students of the targeted 8th grade Modern U. S. History class, the 11th grade American History class, and the 12th grade British Literature class exhibit disrespectful and irresponsible behavior. These behaviors undermine students' regard for teachers, themselves and their peers. Evidence of this problem comes from staff surveys, student interviews, surveys and focus groups, and the number of disciplinary referrals to administration.

Site Description

This study focuses on samples from one junior high and two senior high schools located in the suburbs of a major city in the Midwest. The two high schools have recently begun school-wide character education programs. The middle school does not currently have a formal character education program in place.

Site A

Site A is a high school serving grades nine through twelve. It is one of five high schools in the largest high school district in the state. It opened in 1963 serving a growing community reaching 65,479 in the March 2001 census. The professional staff at Site A is 243 classroom teachers, 18.7% with the bachelor's degree, and 80.1% with master's and above. The district staff, 51.3% male and 48.7% female, is predominately White, 93.8%, with 1.5 % Black, 2.3% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian. In this district the teachers average 17.8 years of teaching experience. The average district teacher salary is $82,882. Only 2.9% of the students are considered low-income, 4.0% limited English proficient, with a 1.1% dropout rate. The student racial/ethnic background is 80.9% White, 2.8% Black, 3.8% Hispanic, and 12.5% Asian combining for a total enrollment of 2,703. Only 18 students are chronically truant. The school has an attendance rate of 94.6%. The average class size is 22.6. The district instructional expenditure per pupil is $6,918 annually. Operating expenditure per pupil is $11,847 (Site A School Report Card).

Site A receives students, freshmen through seniors, from five communities whose residents support education financially and encourage their children to excel in high school to prepare for college. Parents are involved in the school, athletics, clubs and the arts through an active Booster club and Principal's Advisory Board. The school attendance area covers upper-middle to upper socio-economical residential areas as indicated in the following chart.

Town	Average home value	Average household income
One	$382,500	$224,026
Two	174,500	91,699
Three	404,500	218,924
Four	131,000	82,624
Five	150,000	82,809

Figure 1: Demographics of five communities feeding into Site A (U.S. Census, 2000)

The school day begins at 7:30 am and ends at 2:45 pm. Eight 50-minute classes are separated by five-minute passing periods during which student submitted music is played in the halls. Academic departments include art, English, business, social science, science, applied technology, foreign language, ESL, life and family studies, music, mathematics, and special education focusing on learning disabilities and behavior disorders. Students with physical disabilities attend another facility in the district.

A strong athletic program for both males and females offers 24 competitive sports opportunities with newly recognized hockey and lacrosse teams. Speech, debate, drama, chess, and scholastic bowl teams compete interscholastically. Extracurricular clubs number over 64 with new clubs for a Free Tibet, and Gay Straight Alliance gaining recognition. Teacher support is offered through mentoring programs for new teachers and technology experts in each department. Each department holds meetings weekly to keep abreast of current school events.

Site A facilities were completed in 1963, with additions in 1969, and 1977, when a pool and auditorium was added, and is currently under construction, adding new science addition in the courtyard. The researcher's classroom accommodates a maximum of 30 students in individual moveable desks. This room is media-rich with TV, VCR, and Internet computer equipment. The teacher's desk is in front of the student desks, which are arranged in a circular U-shaped

pattern, providing open space in the center. The front wall is occupied by a chalkboard, a variety of roll-up maps, and corkboards for student work and posters.

Site B

Site B is a high school serving grades nine through twelve. It is one of two high schools in the district. It opened in 1966 serving a growing community, which reached 33,442 in 2001. The professional staff of Site B is 137 classroom teachers (with 48 support staff), 33.8% with the bachelor's degree, 66.2% with master's and above. The district staff, 48.1% male and 51.9% female, is predominately White, 97.0%, with 1.7% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian. In this district the teachers average 15.2 years of teaching experience. The average district teacher salary is $67,672.

Low income students make up 15.5% of the population, 9.0% have limited English proficiency, with a 4.6% dropout rate. The student racial/ethnic background is 64.0% White, 2.0% Black, 26.6% Hispanic, and 7.4% Asian combining for a total enrollment of 1,743. Only 1.0% students are chronically truant. The school has an attendance rate of 92.4%. The average class size is 21.1. The district instructional expenditure per pupil is $5,652.00 annually. Operating expenditure per pupil is $10,600 (Site B School Report Card).

Site B has an eight period school day, with each period 50 minutes in length, separated by five minute passing periods. The day begins at 7:45 am and ends at 3:00 pm. The school has academic subject areas including business, industrial arts, English, reading, mathematics, foreign languages, social sciences, science, physical education, music, and art. With 28 different athletic teams, for both males and females, at Site B and 23 clubs with a variety of interests and themes, students have many opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities. Staff members who

are new to the school participate in a mentoring program to familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures as well as the building itself. After school meetings once a week offer support when it is needed.

Located 20 miles from a major metropolitan city, Site B is one of the largest industrial towns in the state. It has 1,200 acres of industrial park, of which 800 of these acres are park/forest preserves. The community has a population of 33,442 and a median income of $67,601. The ethnic breakdown of the community is 79.5% White, 12.9% Hispanic, 1.5 % African American, and 6% that is classified as other (Site B School Report Card). The students of the community enroll in two public school districts. The elementary district consists of seven grade schools and one large middle school. The high school district contains two high schools, Site B is one and the other is in a neighboring community. Students who do not attend public elementary school also feed into Site B. Two parochial schools feed into Site B.

The researcher's classroom at Site B is of average size in the school. It is on the third floor. One wall is composed of windows, one wall is covered with chalkboard, and the last two walls are covered with objects and materials promoting class lessons and student work. The classroom contains 30 student desks, six rows of five. The teacher desk is behind all 30 desks in the back of the room. The classroom is carpeted and has an overhead projector, a computer with Internet and school network access, along with a TV, VCR, and several maps.

Site C

Site C is a junior high school serving grades seven and eight. It is one of 27 schools in the K-8 elementary district. It opened in 1969 serving a growing community, which reached 78,980 in 2000. The professional staff of Site C is 91 classroom teachers, 42.9% with the

bachelor's degree, 57.1% with master's and above. The district staff, 13.1% male and 86.9% female, is predominately White, 96.7%, with 0.7 % Black, 1.3% Hispanic, .8% Asian, and .5% Native American. In this district the teachers average 18.2 years of teaching experience. The average district teacher salary is $60,489.00. Low income students make up 5.4% of the school population, 3.8% limited English proficient, with a 0.1% dropout rate. The student racial/ethnic background is 73.5% White, 6.8% Black, 10.6% Hispanic, and 9.0% Asian combining for a total enrollment of 814. The school has an attendance rate of 95.1%. The average class size is 18.6. The district instructional expenditure per pupil is $5,207 annually. Operating expenditure per pupil is $8,678 (Site C School Report Card).

Site C has a nine period school day, with each period 42 minutes in length, separated by three minute passing periods. The day begins at 7:40 am and ends at 2:15 pm. The school has academic subject areas including industrial arts, English, reading, mathematics, foreign languages, social sciences, science, physical education, music, and art. With 18 different athletic teams, for both males and females, at Site C and 15 clubs with a variety of interests and themes, students have many opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities. Staff members who are new to the school participate in a four-year mentoring program to familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures as well as the building itself. After school meetings once a week offer support when it is needed.

Located 25 miles from a major metropolitan city, Site C has a large business revenue source and one of the largest shopping centers in the country. Although the community is wealthy, the residents are middle-income laborers generally apathetic toward educational issues. The community has a population of 78,980 and a median income of $63,345. The ethnic

breakdown of the community is 68.3% White, 9.3% Hispanic, 7.2 % African American, and 15.0% Asian (Site C School Report Card). The students of the community enroll in two public school districts. The elementary district consists of 21 elementary schools, five junior high schools and one K-8 magnet school. The high school district contains five high schools; Site C feeds into three of those high schools. The researcher's classroom at Site C is of average size in the school. It is on the second floor. One wall is composed of windows, one wall is covered with chalkboard, and the last two walls are covered with objects and materials promoting class lessons and student work. The classroom contains 30 student desks, six rows of five. The teacher desk is in front of the room. The classroom is carpeted and has an overhead projector, a computer with Internet and school network access, along with a TV, VCR, and several maps.

National Context

For centuries educators have been concerned about the role of education in teaching values (Wood, 1999). After years of discussion, the term *character education* has been defined as "a planned, comprehensive, and systematic approach for teaching self respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and citizenship" (Gholar, 2001, p.1). Character education has been approached from many angles and has taken many forms. It has, like the proverbial pendulum, swung in and out of fashion.

Just as fashion changes, so does the definition of character change to fit its environment. In the early decades of the twentieth century, a widely used code of conduct was the "Children's Morality Code" that emphasized "ten laws of right living": self-control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork (Hutchins, 1917).

The first three decades of the twentieth century were marked by fast-paced technological change, increasing immigration and urbanization, and disturbing social and moral decline. These changes included the disintegration of the family, uncontrolled individualism with little concern for the collective good, political corruption, propaganda, crime, shifting cultural values and decline of religion (McKown, 1935). H. C. McKown's concerns of 76 years ago are reactions to the social context of the time—not unlike the concerns of today's educators reacting to similar social conditions at the end of the twentieth century (Leming, 1997). As reported by Graham Buck and Erin Holmes in the Daily Herald on March 4, 2001, "Statistics show teen arrests rising, parents spending more time at work and less time at home with their kids. Educators have adopted zero-tolerance policies" in an attempt to deter students' violent/aggressive behaviors.

In 1990, Michael Josephson began gathering data to determine whether a decline in morals over the generations had occurred. The results of his study gained the support of the Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics and resulted in the ethics program for schools, *Character Counts,* in 1993 (Buck, 2001). This program presents its tenets in six distinct pillars: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Its intention, Ahmed-Ullah stated (as cited by Stock, 2001, p. 4), is to transcend religious and political boundaries and give children the basics of good morals. Johnson's *Character Counts* movement has become the moral juggernaut of the new millennium.

Many schools across the country proudly display banners, *Character Counts.* The premise is difficult to dispute. But, does character education have a positive effect on behavior? Are the results of these efforts to incorporate morality into education measurable, observable,

and strong enough to overcome the horrifying actions of youngsters who assault their classmates with guns in our school? Does character education really have an impact on students' behavior?

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Discussions with staff members provided some actual problem evidence that misbehaviors occur frequently. These discussions provided background knowledge for the specific misbehaviors that would normally occur in these school environments. By identifying these misbehaviors, the staff will have a better handle of what to look for in relation the rules and regulations published in school handbooks.

School Rules and Regulations for Behavior

Each of the three sites publishes a full description of rules and regulations of the school for parents and students. In addition, each student hears the rules and regulations from his teacher the first week of school. These rules address expected behavior and possible consequences for infractions. Areas addressed include: attendance, absence, classroom discipline, truancy, gross disobedience, misconduct, undesirable groups, sexual harassment, disabling products, vandalism, dress code, loitering, respiratory sensitivity, drug and alcohol policy, false fire alarms, smoking, tobacco, dress code, excessive show of affection, discrimination, and senior pranks. Although these rules are clearly established and presented, they are frequently broken, necessitating administrative staff to administer consequences.

Administrative Referrals

Data was gathered from administration to document the number of disciplinary referrals for infractions of rules, focusing on rules regarding tardiness, truancy, insubordination, and

fighting policies. The data gathered compared the figures from first quarter 2000 and first quarter 2001 from each of the three sites.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFERRALS

	1st quarter 2000	1st quarter 2001
Site A		
Tardies	312	311
Truancies	42	32
Insubordination	184	144
Fighting	19	3
Site B		
Tardies	221	180
Truancies	239	149
Insubordination	245	227
Fighting	9	11
Site C		
Tardies	30	8
Truancies	1	0
Insubordination	61	35
Fighting	32	20

Figure 2: Number of administrative behavior referrals during 1st quarter of the school year

Student Behavior Surveys

Prior to gathering data, parents and students completed and returned consent forms (Appendix A & B) agreeing to be part of the study on character education effectiveness. Students were surveyed at the beginning of the school year to assess individual perceptions of student, teacher, and administrator behavior and respect as exhibited in the school environment. This research group developed the Student Behavior Surveys (Appendix C) based on previous research conducted by educational professionals, particularly relying on Thomas Lickona (1996) and Esther F. Schaeffer (1998) and (1999) and on input from colleagues.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR SURVEY RESULTS

1. What student behaviors irritate you and should not be tolerated in the classroom?

- Students that show lack of respect for other students and teachers
- Invasion of personal space—being touched, being struck by something thrown
- Students that are constantly talking and disrupting the class
- Lack of effort
- Students copying other students' home work
- Students lying to the teacher about schoolwork
- Students sleeping
- Students trying to be someone they're not
- Inappropriate clothing
- Getting hit by something someone threw

2. What teacher behaviors irritate you and should be avoided?

- Teachers assigning too much homework
- Teachers not giving enough opportunities to raise grades
- Teachers over-reacting to unimportant issues
- Rattling off facts
- Too strict
- Boring class
- Air of superiority, teachers who talk down to students, name-calling, belittling
- Teachers who abuse their power
- Lying

- Teachers who transfer anger
- When a teacher claims a kid is disrupting class by doing something, but not bothering anyone but the teacher . . . then the teacher is disrupting class
- When teachers don't help students that are quiet
- Giving too many chances to students
- Teachers who do not pace the class to the students' needs
- Favoritism
- Not allowing students to have ownership
- Lack of understanding
- Incompetence

3. What administrator behaviors irritate you?
   - Strict rules
   - Zero-tolerance rules—100% ridiculous and harmful
   - Off-campus restrictions
   - Calling you down all the time
   - Abuse of power
   - Cranky people that are always crabby
   - Not listening to students
   - Trying to help you out too much

Figure 3: Student Behavior Survey Results

Student Likert Scale Survey

Staff and targeted students were given the Likert Scale Survey (Appendix D) at the beginning of the school year to determine perceptions of behavior and respect as demonstrated by students in the school environment and beyond. The same survey was administered to staff and students; however, the results were tabulated separately. The Likert Scale Survey was given to document the extent to which 15 teachers and 70 targeted students observed positive behavior and respect from the targeted students. This research team developed the Likert Scale Survey questions based on materials published by Schaeffer (1999) and Lickona (1996).

STUDENT LIKERT SCALE SURVEY RESULTS

1. **Do students exhibit good behavior in class?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	1	16	3	0
SITE B	0	12	12	2
SITE C	1	6	16	1
TOTAL	**2**	**34**	**31**	**3**

2. **Do students exhibit good behavior in the hallways?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	0	9	11	0
SITE B	0	9	12	5
SITE C	1	6	12	5
TOTAL	**1**	**24**	**35**	**10**

3. **Do students exhibit good behavior in the cafeteria?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	0	7	13	0
SITE B	0	9	10	7
SITE C	2	3	11	6
TOTAL	**2**	**19**	**34**	**1**

4. **Do students exhibit good behavior at co-curricular events?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	0	13	6	0
SITE B	0	16	7	3
SITE C	1	15	7	1
TOTAL	**1**	**44**	**20**	**4**

5. **Do students exhibit good behavior off-campus during non-school hours?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	2	3	10	5
SITE B	0	2	12	12
SITE C	0	7	6	11
TOTAL	**2**	**12**	**28**	**28**

6. **Do students show respect for their teachers?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	2	15	2	1
SITE B	0	20	6	0
SITE C	2	9	10	3
TOTAL	**4**	**44**	**18**	**4**

7. **Do students show respect towards other students?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	0	10	9	1
SITE B	0	9	14	3
SITE C	0	10	12	2
TOTAL	**0**	**29**	**35**	**6**

8. **Do students show respect for themselves?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	2	13	4	1
SITE B	0	13	11	2
SITE C	5	14	5	0
TOTAL	**7**	**40**	**20**	**3**

9. **Do students show respect towards their parents?**

	all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely
SITE A	0	8	10	2
SITE B	3	11	12	0
SITE C	3	11	6	4
TOTAL	**6**	**30**	**28**	**6**

Figure 4: Student Likert scale survey results

Teacher Pre-Surveys

A random sampling of junior and senior high school teachers in the three targeted sites completed the Teacher Pre-Survey (Appendix E) to identify behaviors most commonly eliciting

disciplinary response and behaviors that threaten safety in the school. Teachers were asked to identify the most common behavior problems addressed in the classroom.

Behaviors identified as most commonly eliciting disciplinary responses from classroom teachers were:

1. Disrespect to other students
2. Excessive tardiness
3. Joking around too much
4. Off-task students
5. Laziness
6. Cheating
7. Excessive absence
8. Dishonesty

Teachers identified the following behaviors as threatening to safety in the school:

1. Roughhousing, pushing shoving
2. Sexual acts, perverted activities
3. Racial/ethnic/gender prejudice, discrimination, harassment, threats
4. Isolation
5. Reckless driving in parking lot

Figure 5: Teacher pre-survey results

Based on the results of the Student Behavior Surveys, student and teacher Likert Scale Surveys and the Teacher Pre-Surveys, the research team identified the following specific behaviors to target in the character intervention:

1. Excessive talking interrupting the class
2. Cheating
3. Disrespectful behavior
4. Irresponsible behavior

These specific behaviors were targeted to be modified in all three sites through implementation of character education strategies. This research team developed these surveys to identify on-site behaviors to target and to compare identified behaviors perceived as problematic nationwide.

Teacher Likert Behavior Survey

At all three sites, a total of 15 randomly selected teachers (five at each site) completed the same Likert Scale Survey (Appendix D) that the students completed. The results were unanimous among the teachers. Student behavior is perceived to be acceptable "most of the time" in all three school environments.

Student Focus Groups

Within the first two weeks of the intervention, facilitators of this research project met with a random group of 8 to 12 targeted students at each site and conducted focus group discussions (Appendix F). These discussions consisted of an in-depth analysis of respectful and responsible behaviors exhibited by students and desired by students. A focus group format was implemented in addition to the surveys in order to delve deeper into the opinions of and interactions between these students. The bulleted answers below are student responses to the focus group discussions held at each site. Each statement below is the condensed version of the most commonly voiced responses in each focus group.

Student Focus Group Discussions

1. How do you define good behavior by students in school?

2. Respect for students, teachers, and themselves

   - Doing the right thing, following rules
   - Showing pride in self

3. What behaviors, commonly exhibited in school, do you consider inappropriate?

   - Cursing
   - Bad attitude toward teachers
   - Not caring about anything
   - Picking on students
   - Public display of affection

4. What do you think causes students to behave inappropriately?

   - Peer pressure
   - Jealousy
   - Insecurity
   - Poor or lack of parental roll-modeling
   - Lack of success in school
   - Trying to show off or impress others

5. Is respect an issue for most students?

   - "Yes, many students don't understand what respect is."

5. How do students show respect?

   - Common courtesy
   - Help others out with homework
   - The Golden Rule

6. How do teachers show respect for students?

   - Try to listen to students
   - Take an interest in students' lives

7. How do students show respect for their teachers?

   - Follow directions, rules

8. How do students demonstrate their sense of responsibility?

   - By doing what is expected

9. How do students most commonly exhibit irresponsible behavior?

   - Using inappropriate language
   - Not following rules
   - Not turning in homework or doing work in general
   - Wearing inappropriate clothing

10. What do you consider cheating? Give examples.

    - Using cheat sheets
    - Copying other's work
    - Copying from another student's test
    - Downloading web papers and turning them in as your own

11. How do teachers/staff most commonly exhibit irresponsible behavior?

    - Physical behavior
    - Hypocritical behavior
    - Double standard

Figure 6: Student Focus Group Results

Probable Causes of Behavioral Problems

Literature-Based Causes

The literature attributed students' lack of respect and responsibility to issues relating to the following social conditions: lack of two-parent families, drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse, a desire for material goods, desire for respect, a decline of value for human life, violence in the media, a disconnection with members of society, lack of healthful community

activities and support, and the schools' failure to address current trends. These probable causes were supported by Schaeffer (1998a), (1999) and Lickona (1996). They conclude that there are 10 major causes for inappropriate behavior:

Lack of two-parent families

Due to the drastic increase in divorce over the past few decades (over 50% of marriages in the U.S. ended in divorce in 2000, according to the U. S. Census Bureau), and the increase of births out of wedlock, single parent families have increased respectively. Having only one parent to model for and supervise a child is much more difficult than having both parents involved in the upbringing of a child. Also, the child loses out on the role model of one of the sexes. "The decline of the two parent family, especially the dramatic increase in fatherless families, is the single strongest predictor of juvenile crime" (Lickona, 1996).

Lickona goes on to state that millions of children are growing up without any sense of right and wrong due to a lack of stability and, in general, poor parenting (Lickona, 1996).

Drug and alcohol abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse is rapidly increasing among youths today. These mind-altering substances seriously affect students' views of what is right and wrong. These views often lead to negative behaviors in society. Almost 6 out of 10 students in high school have admitted to having used an illegal drug other than alcohol (Lickona, 1996).

Physical and sexual abuse

Physical and sexual abuse will have a major psychological effect on the minds of young people. This abuse leaves the students with a warped view of appropriate behaviors. The

increasing frequency of older children abusing younger children is attributed to youth having been physically and/or sexually abused by adults (Schaeffer, 1999).

Desire for material goods

In today's materialistic society, certain objects have become overemphasized. This materialism has rearranged students' priorities, which confuses the sense of what is necessary and what is extravagant. Parents, teachers, and students model the desire for material goods at an earlier and earlier age. Television, mass media, and society itself have promoted the need to establish identity through material possessions.

Desire for respect

Due to many of the factors listed above, today's students do not receive the proper respect from adult role models that they deserve. These factors often cause the student to lash out. Lickona (1996) notes that students take up weapons to demand that respect from peers.

Decline of value for human life

Recent acts of terrorism including the suicide missions in New York City, Oklahoma City, and elsewhere, illustrate a horrific decline of value for human life. Personally, families may be affected by recent corporate cutbacks also expressing a general lack of concern for the individual. According to a 1989 United Nations report (as sited in Lickona, 1996), U.S. teens have the highest abortion rate in the developed world This lack concern for human life is evident in the interaction of students in schools. The decline in value for human life is reflected in the lack of respect given from one person to another.

Violence in the media

Through an increase of violence in the media—music, movies, television—and other influences that have bypassed parental guidance, students are left confused at the negative impact of this violence (Schaeffer, 1998b).

Disconnection with members of society

Schaeffer (1998b) notes a lack of adult contact and community involvement and an increase in non-personal interaction through television and the Internet, all contributing to a void in ethical values in society. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology statistics (as sited in Buck, 2001) reveal that students' time is divided between watching television (1500 hours), attending school (600 hours), and in meaningful conversations with parent (33 hours on average per year). These priorities illustrate this sense of disconnection with members of the family as well as with society.

Lack of healthful community activities and support

Schaeffer (1998b) suggests that the lack of community-supported activities for young people contributes to a decline in values. This research team identifies the attempts to provide social venues for youth are often tainted by negative influences—drug and alcohol peddling, gang activities, as documented in teen dance clubs in the area. Other more carefully regulated activities are often too expensive for youth to afford.

Schools' failure to address current trends

Although schools cannot take all the blame, Schaeffer (1998a) acknowledges that schools often fail to react to current trends, leaving a gap between student activities and school's recognizing the need to address those issues. Schools have failed to recognize students' needs to

express themselves on these issues and to provide a forum for such discussions. "Schools have not created a culture that is sensitive to the needs of its students and [schools have not created a culture that] enables them to identify those who are most troubled" (Schaeffer, 1999).

To determine the site based causes of students failing to take responsibility for their actions and to show respect to each other, this research group created and distributed two surveys. The first was the student behavior survey. This form was given to all targeted students.

Site Based Causes

To determine if the research based causes are similar to those found in the schools involved in the research, this research group created and distributed two surveys. The first was the Student Behavior Survey (Appendix C). This form was given to all students in the classes that participated in the research. In this survey, students were to complete three open-ended questions asking them to identify behaviors that should not be tolerated in class or avoided in school. Students could provide several answers to each question. These results were gathered, tallied, and compared to the research based causes previously mentioned.

As we predicted, the results of the surveys were very similar to the results of professional research. Some of the most common answers given suggested students make fun of and tease others based on appearance, status, talents, and material possessions. Answers went on to explain that these behaviors were an attempt by one to degrade another in order to gain respect. Other answers that matched research describe students' lack of a solid home life in which drugs and alcohol are often present and abused by all family members. These behaviors contribute to students' lack of interest in school and demonstrate irresponsible behavior related to schoolwork.

Teachers and administrators completed the second type of survey. This Teacher Pre-Survey (Appendix E) was completed by a total of 15 randomly selected teachers, five teachers from each of the three sites involved in the research. This survey consisted of three open-ended questions asking teachers and administrators to identify inappropriate behaviors that detract from classroom activities, strategies used to deal with inappropriate behaviors, and to offer possible suggestions to handle disrespectful or irresponsible behavior. Not surprisingly, teachers and administrators identified similar behaviors that students determined would detract from classroom activities. The most common answers given were disrespect to peers or teachers, lack of concern of education, not completing work, disrupting class, and disturbing others. These are behaviors found in most classrooms in each site in which teachers deal with on a daily basis. This research group has concluded that our site-based causes are similar to those found in the research previously conducted prior to our introduction of research implemented in each site.

Chapter 3

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Literature Review

After researching several probable causes identified by students, teachers, and educators, this research group has developed six main initiatives to implement in classrooms in an effort to build character within the targeted school community. The solution strategies are as follows.

1. To develop social bonds with students
2. To promote social unity within the classroom
3. To nurture empathy and self-discipline within students
4. To identify and analyze morals to help guide the students decision-making process
5. To encourage parental support and create an awareness of student behavior and character
6. To develop site support among students, faculty, and the community

Social Bonds

Developing social bonds with students is critical for success in an educational environment. In a unified, safe classroom, students can view the teacher as a friend and a role model. According to Schaeffer (1999), many students are feeling disconnected and alienated from society. One way to help them re-connect is to encourage a bond among the students. Teachers can do this by treating students with love and respect. The teacher is to set a good example for students by encouraging moral behavior and correcting disrespectful behavior through guidance and discussion (Lickona, 1999). David H. Elkind and Freddy Sweet (1997) state that behavior can be expressed by the choices students make. Teachers can help guide

students' decision-making processes if there is a bond established. By doing this, teachers can help students make more informed choices which will strengthen character among students.

Promote Unity

Closely related to creation of social bonds among students and teachers is the effort to establish a feeling of unity in a classroom. Patricia Horsch, Ji-Qi Chen, and Donna Nelson, in "Rules and Rituals" (1999) recommend that teachers design classroom activities to specifically foster bonding among students. If done thoughtfully, the classroom environment can serve as a teacher (Horsch, et al.1999). The purpose of these activities is to maximize students' independence while at the same time facilitating their interactions (Lickona, 1999). Friendships can then begin at a base level in which students respect one another. Socratic dialogue can then be implemented into instruction when discussing ideas or problem solving. Elkind and Sweet (1997) have found this approach to work particularly well in classrooms. This is a powerful teaching method because it actively engages the learner and forces critical thinking, which is just what is needed in examining ethics, values, and other character issues. This method is also dramatic and entertaining, and it triggers lively classroom discussion. As a result, students are more understanding of their classmates. When students are challenged to practice respect and care in their everyday peer relations, these values begin to become part of their character (Lickona, 1999).

Nuture Empathy

Analysis and discussion can teach students to empathize with others. Students can hear and share values, morals, and ideals when social bonds have been formed (Elkind & Sweet, 1997). Students can listen to understand the reasoning and rationale behind other student's

values and morals. This teaches students about respect towards others and also themselves. It gives students a chance to continually think about and re-evaluate themselves. Research that dates back to sociologist Emile Durkheim almost 100 years ago suggests that children and adolescents need to learn to feel a sense of belonging to and responsibility for others (as sited in Benninga & Wynne, 1997). When students can empathize with others, they can learn to act more responsibly (Lickona, 1999). Several classroom activities can be designed to nurture empathy among students. Jacques S. Benninga and Edward A. Wynne (1997) have found through their research that activities in which students assume responsibility for their own learning and behavior and the learning and behavior of others will result in positive changes in pro-social character traits.

Morals

Classroom activities that build unity and comfort among students can lead to an awareness of values and morals (Elkind & Sweet, 1997). When students have an awareness of moral standards, they can then begin to analyze their own values, while simultaneously evaluating their decision-making process. Research conducted by Constance Perry (1996) shows that by using literature teachers can help students learn socially accepted morals. Class activities can then guide students to learn to examine what is right in the story, and what is right in real life. Elkind and Sweet have found that these activities not only get students to share their personal ideas and morals, but also help them to understand other points of view. It is at this point that teachers can help students evaluate their own decision-making process about what is morally right. After all, Perry concludes, the social structure of school and the classrooms are where students shape their ideas and morals. When students are interacting with one another

through classroom activities, there will grow deeper understanding of others and their lives. This interaction will serve as springboard to guide students to make better choices that will build character and influence rational behavior (Tyree, Vance, & McJunkin, 1997).

Parental Support

One of the most vital components of character education is the partnership schools make with the parents to help promote responsible behavior (Lickona, 1999). The school community must get parents involved in the action plan to identify values and morals as goals for students. Teachers must keep in contact with parents regarding their student's behavior and progress to constantly exemplify positive moral values in their work with one another (Berreth & Berman, 1997). This research shows that schools with high parental involvement tend to have less behavioral issues among their students. The findings of Lickona (1999), Elkind and Sweet (1997), and Benninga and Wynne (1997) all state that the parental involvement helps to build bonds between parents and students which provides students with a positive connection, that together with the school, can help students act more responsibly.

Site Support

Each research study previously stated indicates that for a program of this magnitude to be successful, the entire school needs to actively commit to and participate in the character building. The entire community must combine efforts to work together state, develop, and celebrate core moral values (Berreth & Berman, 1997). To work these efforts into the classroom is not difficult, but does require teacher and administrator training. Schaeffer (1999) said that staff development is essential when character education will be facilitated and modeled by educators. Staff meetings and learning sessions need to be offered to help educators develop a common

vocabulary and ideology to implement character education in the school. Schaeffer (1999) also notes that the school leadership must be committed to making the program successful. A strong leader is needed to provide the path the school will take.

Universal values such as respect and responsibility build the type of people our society needs. One need not look too hard to see that today's young people are not getting the nurturing of former decades. Because of this, many of our young people feel alienated and disconnected. Character education is a vital part of the solution to help our young people do right by each other. Character education can provide the nation's youth with the information and the skills they need to mature into ethical and virtuous people. The previously stated six ideas provide a sound foundation that any character education program needs. All aspects must receive due attention and proper focus. Students must not see contradictions between actions and words, for the school community must model moral behavior to promote moral behavior (Berreth & Berman, 1997).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased emphasis on character education, during the period of August 2001 through November 2001, the 8th grade Modern American History students, the 11th grade American History students, and the 12th grade British Literature students in the targeted classes will decrease the incidence of disrespectful and irresponsible behavior and decrease the number of disciplinary referrals issued.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Teachers will design activities in which students will learn about and practice conflict-resolution skills to decrease disrespectful and irresponsible behaviors among classmates.
2. After discussing the importance of a character education program with staff survey results, fellow faculty members will show commitment to this program by modeling respectful behaviors toward other staff members and students.
3. Teachers will design and implement activities that build upon the students' sense of caring and empathy toward others in relation to individual instructional curriculums.
4. Through conversations at site Open Houses, teachers will encourage parents and members of the school community to become more aware of and more involved in character education and become more positive role models for students.
5. Teachers will facilitate group discussions among target students focusing on the importance of respect and responsibility as students move into adulthood.

To increase the effectiveness of the processes, the researchers determined that past practices needed revision, specifically to include the following:

- Teachers will design activities in which students will learn about and practice conflict resolution skills to decrease disrespectful and irresponsible behaviors among classmates.

- After discussing the importance of a character education program with staff survey results, fellow faculty members will show commitment to this program by modeling respectful behaviors toward other staff members and students.
- Teachers will design and implement activities that build upon the students' sense of caring and empathy toward others in relation to individual instructional curriculums.
- Through conversations at site open houses, teachers will encourage parents and members of the school community to become more aware of and more involved in character education and become more positive role models for students.
- Teachers will facilitate group discussions among target students focusing on the importance of respect and responsibility as students move into adulthood.
- Throughout the duration of this character education program, teachers will make a concerted effort to model appropriate behavior while recognizing and rewarding positive behaviors, such as the levels of responsibility and respect of the selected students.

Project Action Plan

The action plan for the character education program is listed below on a week-by-week basis. The four classroom-based activities will take place at some point during a 40-minute class period from week # 4 through week # 11 according to the teacher's curriculum progress and students' response to the program.

Week # 1: Teacher will distribute and collect both student and parent consent forms.

Week # 2: Teacher will administer the Student Behavior Survey (Appendix C) and the Likert Behavior Scale Survey (Appendix D) to the students. Teacher will distribute the Teacher Pre-Survey (Appendix E) and the Likert Behavior Scale Survey

(Appendix D) to staff members. The teacher will then record the results of all the surveys.

Week # 3: Teacher will randomly select a focus group of students to meet and discuss character education issues (Appendix F). Student responses will then be introduced to parents at open house dates.

Week # 4-11: Activity # 1—Partner Illustrations of Respect and Responsibility

Students will place themselves into groups of two. The teacher will facilitate a discussion revolving around issues of respect and responsibility. Students will then illustrate their personal views on respect and responsibility on paper. The students will then present their illustrations to their classmates.

Value: These presentations will further the awareness of the variations of students views of respect and responsibility.

Week # 4-11: Activity # 2—Curriculum Integration Dealing with Respect

Students will complete their teacher's desired reading activity. Throughout the reading, the students will be recording specific actions of the characters. Then, the students will answer the following questions:

1. How does the passage change if the main character gains more respect from his/her peers?
2. How have other characters disrespectful behavior had an effect on the main character?
3. How would you have handled the situation differently?

Value: Students will identify respectful behaviors in a reading activity.

Week # 4-11: Activity # 3—Curriculum Integration Dealing with Responsibility

Students will choose a character from a previous reading passage. They will then compose a written essay explaining how this character displayed both responsible and irresponsible behaviors. The students will then discuss how they would have acted in the same situation.

Value: The students will analyze a passage and be able to differentiate between responsible and irresponsible behavior.

Week # 4-11: Activity # 4—Conflict Resolution Role Play

The teacher will discuss various conflict resolution strategies with students. Students will choose pre-determined roles from a hat to determine their role in the activity. Students will then role-play their chosen conflict. The teacher will interrupt the activity periodically to discuss possible outcomes and solutions.

Value: Students will act out and deal with realistic conflict situations.

Week # 12: The teacher will distribute the Student Behavior Post Survey (Appendix G) and the Teacher Post Survey (Appendix G) to the students and teachers, respectively. The results will be tallied, and the teacher will also gather discipline referral data on the targeted problems of the targeted students, all to be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Week # 13: The Character Education Program research team will tabulate all data gathered.

Week # 14: The research team will incorporate statistical results into their action research project to determine the level of effectiveness of the character education program.

Methods of Assessment

The researchers assessed the success of the character education intervention by comparing responses on the Pre-Surveys (Appendix C and E) with the responses on the Post Surveys (Appendix G and H), and by comparing the numbers of discipline referrals during first quarter 2000 to the number of discipline referrals during first quarter 2001.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the evidence of student respect and responsibility through a character education program targeted at three specific classes in three separate locations in a major metropolitan suburban area. During the first week of classes, the program was introduced, guidelines and classroom rules were established and student and parent permission forms were signed. As measuring instruments, a Student Behavior Survey (Appendix C), a Likert Scale Behavior Survey (Appendix D) for both students and teachers, and a Teacher Pre-Survey (Appendix E), were employed to determine a base line measurement of attitudes toward observed behavior.

Discussions took place among the students in class and with parents during Open House to define the focus on respect and responsibility. It was clearly emphasized that the curriculum would not be decreased with this program. The implementation of various curriculum related activities that incorporate respect for self, peers, and teacher; student responsibility for actions; and conflict resolution skills were selected to produce measurable outcomes. The facilitators utilized cooperative grouping and role-playing as specific vehicles for character education activities. Continued observation of student behavior and interaction with staff and peers was documented in research journals.

The disciplines of social science and literature are optimum vehicles for injecting character development into the curriculum. The study of social, political and economic trends lent itself to analyzing cause and effect relationships in world events. The study of literature

necessarily focuses on motivation and the impact of individuals' reactions to each other and situations. Although the action plan defined four specific activities to focus on building respect and responsibility, it was evident early on, in all three sites, that the initial introduction of the program made character awareness a daily presence. At each site, lesson plans were revised to incorporate role-playing, conflict resolution strategies, and cooperative group interaction activities to promote respectful behavior and individual and group responsibility

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Results of the character education effectiveness study were derived from the Student Behavior Post Survey (Appendix G), which was administered at Sites A, B, and C at the end of the implementation. Students were asked to complete six open-ended questions and to explain their answers. This survey was based upon problem evidence previously discussed in Chapter 2. The purpose of this survey was to gather students' opinions on the program and to see if they recognized any difference in the levels of respect and responsibility demonstrated in themselves and among their classmates. Certain student behaviors such as excessive talking, acts of disrespect, cheating, and lack of effort were identified by both students and faculty as observed problems in the classrooms, hallways and cafeteria. The results that follow indicate what students felt about the program and provide insight into the effectiveness of the respect and responsibility program implemented.

Question 1: Have you noticed a change in student behavior in this class?

Fifty-four percent of the students said that they did notice a positive change in classroom behavior. Students stated that the atmosphere of the class was comfortable and conducive to learning. Students felt that the focus on respect made it clear that each student had the right to be

heard. They mentioned that the fear of receiving disrespectful responses from others was alleviated. This comfort level made these students feel at ease participating in discussion, group activities and projects, and other class events.

Forty-six percent of students did not notice a change in student behavior perhaps because this program was implemented at the beginning of the school year and the class had yet to form its own personality. Therefore, the focus on respect and responsibility and the rules set forth in the class became the basis of the class environment. Students stated they did not notice any change in behavior because this program was established in the first week of school.

Question 2: If so, what positive behaviors have you seen students exhibit?

Fifty-four percent of the students did notice a positive change in student behavior. Since the program was implemented at the beginning of the year, students based their views on previous behavior of others in earlier years of schooling. Students also noticed that each person had an equal say in class and that allowed all students to participate in comfort. Students respected others' views and opinions and listened to everyone in a respectful manner. Students completed their work more effectively and showed respect for the teacher by coming prepared to class and not disrupting class.

Thirty-two percent of students did not notice a change in student behavior. Due to the fact that this program was implemented at the beginning of the school year, students may not have had a chance to observe student behavior prior to the implementation of the program. Therefore, these students could not identify a change. Thirteen percent of the students failed to verbalize their positive response in question 2. One percent of the students (one student) responded that no positive behavior was exhibited during the intervention.

Question 3: Have you felt that your parents have been more involved in your life since the program began?

Thirty-two percent of students felt that the program did result in an increased amount of parental involvement in their lives. Parents were made aware of the program prior to its inception and these students felt that their parents became more involved due to a focus on the respect and responsibility of their child.

Sixty-eight percent of students did not notice any change in parental involvement in their lives. Some parents were already actively involved prior to this program, while others stated that because of the age of the students, parents were a little less involved because students were old enough to make their own decisions.

The responses to this question basically state that parents are involved to an extent. Site A and B students are at an age where they begin to make their own decisions and their parents tend to sit back a bit and provide a watchful eye to what goes on. This response was evident in several surveys. Students felt that their parents either were or were not involved in their academic lives, and by now, may not have the chance to impact their students' academic growth. At Site C, students responded noting very little change in parental involvement.

Question 4: Which aspects of the classroom rules did you feel were most effective?

All of the students felt that all the classroom rules were effective and they could not single out one rule over another. Each class rule was presented early in the school year, so students accepted all rules to govern the class. Therefore, students could not identify a specific rule that made the class comfortable and safe for everyone, but a majority commented on the pleasant classroom atmosphere.

Question 5: Which aspects of the program need improvement?

Eighty-nine percent of the students felt that the program does not need improvement. They did not identify any aspects in need of change. According to them, the program made students aware of the issues of respect and responsibility and that class rules focused students on behaving properly in class.

Eleven percent of the students stated that the issue of respect needs to be improved upon. These students felt that there is still room for improvement in areas of respect for both students and teachers. They suggested more cooperative group activities and group interaction in projects.

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions and/or comments regarding this type of classroom program?

Eighty-two percent of students did not have any suggestions for improvement in this program. They were satisfied with the means and the goals of this program. Overall, these students believed in the program and worked consciously to meets the standards set by the research group.

Eighteen percent of the students thought that the issue of respect should be a focal point in the class. These students stated that they felt that some students were still disrespectful toward peers and the teacher and that there should be harsher punishments for those who are disrespectful. Irresponsible students who do not follow class rules and/or do not meet class expectations should have to suffer harsher consequences for their actions. They felt that this would make these students more accountable for their actions and education.

These behaviors were not just confined to the targeted classes in the study. Teachers of other disciplines who shared the targeted students responded on the Teacher Post Survey (Appendix H) that they noticed that disruptive behavior had decreased in the classroom and in the halls. Faculty members, other than the research team, observed targeted students throughout the two-month intervention. They noticed a higher level of respect and responsibility demonstrated by the students. These faculty members, who previously in Chapter 2 stated certain behaviors detract from classroom lessons, noticed a reduction in disruptive behavior. They did not observe excessive or inappropriately loud talking, instances of disrespect, or other inappropriate behavior that detracts from class lessons. The targeted students were beginning to develop the respect levels set forth by the program. Listening skills increased, students were receptive, and group work was completed effectively and efficiently.

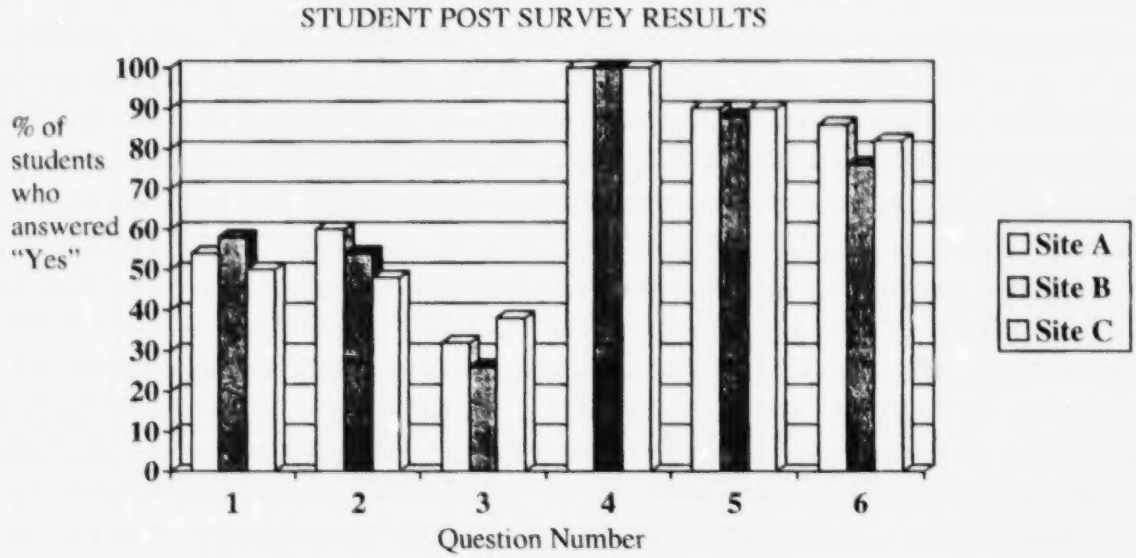

Figure 7: Student post survey results indicate similar trends in all three sites

Conclusions and Recomendations

This research group, through surveys, observation, and feedback believes the character education program with emphasis on respect and responsibility is a success when implemented in the classroom. Students and staff identified specific undesirable behaviors. The targeted classes focused on these behaviors and consciously attempted to curtail such behavior both in and outside the classroom, and to develop behavior patterns that are desirable and productive. The facilitators and other staff members observed the targeted students demonstrating the goals of the intervention.

The intention for implementing the character education program was an attempt to combat the most recent violent incidents in schools across the country. The research team believes that this project has supported the potential effectiveness of the many character education programs in their various forms throughout the country. This project was an attempt to ascertain and measure the effectiveness of such programs. As implemented by the facilitators and the targeted students, character education is effective and would be more effective if it were embraced and implemented by all staff members and students. Buy-in is the key.

Although the research team feels the data is accurate and properly gathered, the major event of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11th began as an external variable and quickly became an internal variable affecting the way everyone in America and the world behaves and lives their lives. The tragedy impacted these students in many ways.

The general public views Site A as a homogeneous upper middle class school. The students were no less affected by the tragedy in New York City than any other community. The

students and staff were subdued, recognizing that many concerns are trivial compared to the enormity of that event. Meaningless misbehavior subsided. Appreciation for one another increased, as did a true desire to understand the Arab and Muslim attitudes in the school community.

Site B is a diverse school that accepts diversity and benefits from it. With this in mind, students were more respectful to others in hopes of unifying the school community and helping one another. Also, by implementing this program at the beginning of the year, it set the tone for a comfortable learning environment that grew as the days went by. Students were willing to work and share with others, while also learning from them.

At Site C, where the community is moderately diverse, being the youngest students in the research study, the events of September 11th brought an end to their innocence and created a seriousness that pervaded the school.

It is quite obvious that the tragedy of September 11th has taken its toll on students' individual behaviors and the entire school climate. Never before had students spoken the Pledge of Allegiance with such confidence and pride. The staff experienced an overwhelming sense of maturity in dealing with these issues associated with terrorism.

As a result of this action research project, indicating that character education in the classroom is effective in improving respect and responsibility and in improving the learning environment and student learning, the research team would recommend incorporating character education in all schools. The method of presentation to a staff is crucial. Depending on the presentation, it can be embraced or rebuked by staff members. It is easy for teachers to react with skepticism and suspicion, interpreting it as suggesting that staff does not care, respect or

take responsibility themselves. Numerous attempts have failed at Site A; however, a grass roots effort is currently taking place as preparations are being made to hold student guided open forums on school concerns. At Site C, several teachers are enthusiastic about implementing such a program. However, this research team believes commitment by everyone in the school is the key to a successful program.

This program can be extended beyond the classroom into the entire school system and beyond. Administrators can easily adopt the two-rule policy dealing with respect and responsibility instead of the myriad of rules written in a school handbook. By having all school personnel and students follow the same rules, it should make a more uniform educational system.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Consent to Participate Letter

I, _____, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this project. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

NAME OF MINOR_____

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN_____

DATE_____

Appendix B

Consent Letter

Dear Student,

I am currently enrolled in a master's degree program. This program requires me to design an implement a project based on an issue that directly affects my instruction. I have chosen to examine the effectiveness of character education in the classroom.

The purpose of this project is to help students become more aware of and improve the levels of respect and responsibility exhibited in the classroom in an effort to provide a better educational environment for all students. It will help you be better prepared for adult life.

I will be conducting my project from August through November 2001. The activities related to the project will take place during regular instruction. The gathering of information for my project during these activities offers no risk of any kind to you. This project will not interfere with any instructional methods or class activities.

Your permission allows me to include you in the reporting of information for my project. All information gathered will be kept completely confidential, and information included in my project report will be grouped so that no individual can be identified. The report will be used to share what I have learned as a result of this project with other professionals in the field of education.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate, information gathered about you will not be included in the report.

If you have any questions or would like further information about this project, please see me.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign the attached statement and return it to me. I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the signed statement if you wish.

Sincerely,

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Student Behavior Survey

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on character education. Please complete the following survey. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of the character education program. Please state your personal feelings and ideas clearly. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

1. What student behaviors irritate you and should not be tolerated in the classroom?

   1.

   2.

   3.

2. What teacher behaviors irritate you and should be avoided?

   1.

   2.

   3.

3. What administrator behaviors irritate you?

   1.

   2.

   3.

Appendix D

Likert Scale Behavior Survey

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on respect and responsibility. Please complete the following survey. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of student respect and responsibility. Please choose one of the following answers for each question. If you have any questions, please ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

1. Do students exhibit good behavior in class?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

2. Do students exhibit good behavior in the hallways?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

3. Do students exhibit good behavior in the cafeteria?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

4. Do students exhibit good behavior at co-curricular events?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

5. Do students exhibit good behavior off campus during non-school hours?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

6. Do students show respect for their teachers?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

7. Do students show respect towards other students?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

8. Do students show respect for themselves?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

9. Do students show respect for their parents?
All of the time Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

Appendix E

Teacher Pre-Survey

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on character education. Please complete the following survey. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of the character education program. Please state your personal feelings and ideas clearly. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

What student behaviors are most common reasons for disciplinary responses from you?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What student behaviors that you have observed are most threatening to student safety?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Appendix F

Student Focus Group

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on character education. Please complete the following survey. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of the character education program. Please state your personal feelings and ideas clearly. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

1. How do you define good behavior by students in school?
2. What behaviors, commonly exhibited in school, do you consider appropriate?
3. What do you think causes students to behave inappropriately?
4. Is respect an issue for most students?
5. How do students show respect for others?
6. How do teachers show respect for students?
7. How do students show respect to their peers?
8. How do students show respect for their teachers?
9. How do students show respect for themselves?
10. How do students demonstrate their sense of responsibility?
11. How do students most commonly exhibit irresponsible behavior?
12. What do you consider cheating? Give examples.
13. How do teachers/staff most commonly exhibit irresponsible behavior?
14. How might students and staff be encouraged to be more respectful and responsible?

Appendix G

Student Post Survey

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on character education. Please complete the following survey. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of the character education program. Please state your personal feelings and ideas clearly. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

1. Have you noticed a change in student behavior in this class?

2. If so, what positive behaviors have you seen students exhibit?

3. Have you felt that your parents have been more involved in your life since this program began?

4. Which aspects of this Character Education Program did you feel were effective?

5. Which aspects of this Character Education Program did you feel were effective?

6. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Appendix H

Teacher Post Survey

Directions: You have agreed to participate in this research study on character education. Briefly describe your observations of student behavior over the past 12 weeks. The information you provide will be used in a study to indicate the effectiveness of the character education program. Please state your personal feelings and ideas clearly. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Remember, your identity will remain anonymous.

During the past 12 weeks, you have had in your class target students in the character education research group. Please comment on the ways they have or have not exhibited behavior showing respect and responsibility.

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